

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MARTINIQUE 0131

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, FW

SUBJECT: ELECTION 1978 - AUTONOMY IS THE ISSUE

1. THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE THREE DEPUTIES IN MARTINIQUE WAS PROCEED-
ING ALONG WITHOUT EXCITEMENT UNTIL MICHEL RENARD ENTERED THE RACE.
RENARD, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE CONSEIL GENERAL HERE AND MAYOR OF
MARIGOT, A SMALL VILLAGE ON THE ATLANTIC COAST SIDE OF MARTINIQUE,
AND A STRONG PERSONALITY, HAS BEEN SELECTED BY THE RASSEMBLEMENT
POUR LA REPUBLIQUE (RPR) TO CHALLENGE AIME CESAIRE OF THE PARTI
PROGRESSISTE DE MARTINIQUE (PPM). THE CONSTITUENCY IN WHICH
CESAIRE AND RENARD ARE CONTESTING REPRESENTS APPROXIMATELY 40
034:3,5 (140,000) OF MARTINIQUE'S POPULATION (330,000), MADE UP
OF FORT-DE-FRANCE - POPULATION 110,000, LAMENTIN - POPULATION
28,000, AND ST. JOSEPH - POPULATION 12,000. RENARD CAME OUT
FIGHTING, DECLARING THAT HE WAS GIVING UP HIS COMFORTABLE POSITION
WITH THE CONSEIL GENERAL TO COMBAT CESAIRE'S DEMAND FOR AUTONOMY.
EMILE MAURICE, PRESIDENT OF THE RPR, SETTING THE TONE FOR THE
CONTEST, STATED THAT THE MARCH 12 ELECTION IS NOT AN ELECTION LIKE
ANY OTHER ELECTION. HE DECLARED THAT THE FATE AND FUTURE OF
MARTINIQUE WILL REST ON ITS OUTCOME.

2. THIS CHALLENGE TO CESAIRE STIMULATED HIS INDEPENDENT PPM PARTY
WORKERS INTO ORGANIZING MASS RALLIES AND HANGING HUGE SIGNS ACROSS
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MAIN ARTERIES OF FORT-DE-FRANCE. A CESAIRE SUPPORTER TOLD THE
REPORTING OFFICER THE RALLY WHICH THEY HAVE ORGANIZED FOR THE
EVENING OF FEBRUARY 24 WILL PERHAPS BE ONE OF THE LARGEST POLITICAL
RALLIES EVER ORGANIZED IN MARTINIQUE. CESAIRE HIMSELF, USUALLY
SHIELDED BEHIND HIS INTELLECTUAL FACADE AND THE OFFICIAL SEAL
OF HIS MAYORSHIP, HAS BEEN ON THE HUSTINGS DAILY, AND SO HAS
RENARD. RENARD HAS RECEIVED DAILY ATTENTION IN THE ONE (GOVERNMENT

CONTROLLED) DAILY NEWSPAPER, FRANCE -ANTILLES. CESAIRE, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAS HAD TO RELY LARGELY ON HIS OWN PARTY ORGAN FOR PUBLIC EXPOSURE. HOWEVER, GIVEN THE FACT THAT CESAIRE HAS SERVED AS MAYOR AND AS A DEPUTY IN THE FRENCH PARLIAMENT FOR MORE THAN 30 YEARS, HE STILL HOLDS THE EDGE. SINCE RENARD OUTLINED ON RADIO CARIB FEBRUARY 16TH HIS PROGRAM OF "COMBAT OUVERT" AGAINST THE PROPONENTS OF AUTONOMY, THE ELECTION HAS BECOME THE MAIN TOPIC AT SOCIAL GATHERINGS. THE MARTINIQUEANS ARE PREDICTABLY AND SHARPLY DIVIDED ALONG LINES FOR OR AGAINST AUTONOMY, BUT WOULD IT IS BELIEVED HERE, VOTE OVERWHELMINGLY AGAINST A CALL FOR INDEPENDENCE. RENARD'S TACTIC IS TO TAG THE LABEL OF INDEPENDENCE ON CESAIRE. MOST, PARTICULARLY YOUNG PROFESSIONALS, ARE OF THE IMPRESSION THAT RENARD COMES UP SHORT INTELLECTUALLY AND THAT CESAIRE WILL NOT BE TAGGED AND WILL WIN. THE OLDER MARTINIQUEANS AND THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY ARE PREDICTING OTHERWISE. THEY HOPE CESAIRE WILL LOSE. THE OUTCOME MAY BE IMPORTANT.
ROBINSON

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